

# *Rim Sim*

## *Crowding the Rim* Game Simulation Teaching Notes, July 2001

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## **I. The Simulation**

The *RimSim* is a 6-hour, 7-party negotiation that focuses on creating a framework for disaster recovery efforts. It involves a range of players from five countries affected by two natural disasters: a typhoon about a year ago and an earthquake about 6 months ago. The players are members of an International Disaster Working Group (IDWG) that has been created by an international commission. The IDWG has been charged with drawing up a framework for managing two issues: the reconstruction of regionally significant infrastructure and the design of a mechanism for allocating funding to each country for reconstruction of local infrastructure and ongoing humanitarian needs. The first will involve making choices among five options (two harbor options, two airport options, and one rail line option). Each will have three levels at which to rebuild. The second will involve five starting point options. Participants are encouraged to invent other options for both issues.

## **II. Introduction to the Simulation**

The goal of *RimSim* is to raise questions about traditional approaches to disaster preparedness planning and reconstruction efforts in an international setting, in this case the Pacific Rim. Players must confront the reverberating effects of disasters and the problems of using science and technical information in decision-making and are introduced to a consensus-building approach emphasizing face-to-face dialogue and multinational cooperation in dealing with humanitarian concerns as well as long-term efforts to reconstruct local and regional infrastructure.

## **III. Teaching Points**

The *RimSim* simulation raises 4 key points:

### ***1 Ripple Effects.***

To provide a realistic environment for participants to experience how the "ripple effects" of a natural disaster (such as a typhoon, earthquake, volcanic eruption, etc.) can complicate short- and long-term recovery; as globalization continues, these reverberating effects will likely be increasingly rapid and unpredictable, with impacts both near and far from a disaster's location;

### ***2. Role of Science.***

To illustrate of some of the problems surrounding the use of scientific information in disaster recovery situations. Scientific information is rarely conclusive or definitive, and can thus add uncertainty to the disaster planning process. Participants, for example, will face the challenges of having to make judgments in the face of insufficient information,

having to weigh new scientific information against established data, assessing the credibility of information presented by adversaries, and determining to what extent to use information that does not point to a definitive conclusion.

### ***3. Multi-Party Negotiation.***

To create awareness about the fact that when disasters strike, they affect many people, either directly or indirectly. Many stakeholders, therefore, will want to be involved in recovery efforts. Some of these stakeholder interests and priorities may be in direct conflict, while others will find common ground quite easily. A truly workable and sustainable outcome must resolve conflicting interests.

To demonstrate that groups faced with scientific uncertainty can engage in joint fact-finding to increase the chances that technical recommendations will be understood and accepted. Joint fact-finding and information-generation can often also enhance the confidence that participants have in the information on which decisions must be made

To allow participants to experience, in a protected learning setting, a consensus building approach to disaster planning that is quite different from the conventional model that stresses top-down decision-making within countries after-the-fact. Specifically, the consensus building approach seeks to create value for all stakeholders through a collaborative inquiry aimed at meeting conflicting interests and handling scientific and technical uncertainty.

### ***4. Building Personal Relationships.***

To provide an "icebreaking" experience for participants of the Crowding the Rim Summit to experience the value of getting to know each other in a realistic setting, before addressing how the Pacific Rim region can best prepare for natural disasters in the future. The exercise will also demonstrate how the mutual gains, consensus-building approach to recovery helps build enhanced long-term relationships among stakeholders.

## **IV. Mechanics**

The simulation takes approximately nine hours (90 minutes for preparation, about an hour for a same role meeting, 30 minutes for country caucuses, four hours for the negotiation itself, an hour for small group debriefing, and an hour for the plenary debriefing). General instructions should be provided to participants in advance of the negotiation, so that they can come prepared. This will reduce the time the participants will need to be together by about an hour and a half.

There are roles for 7 players and a facilitator in the game. Any number of groups of seven can play. Some players can be doubled up in a single role if the total number of people participating is not divisible by seven.

The game schedule should proceed as follows:

## **A. Schedule**

### **Preparation for the game -- 1 1/2 hours (previous day)**

Participants should read the General Instructions, as well read and digest the Confidential Instructions for their role.

### **Simulation preparation: Same-Role Meetings -- an hour (simulation day)**

If more than one group of seven is involved, players should meet in small, same-role groups to discuss their assigned roles. This will be done with teams of three facilitators to answer any questions they may have and review the facts relating to their role, but not to offer advice.

### **Simulation preparation: Country Caucuses -- 30 minutes (simulation day)**

Players go to the room where there negotiation will take place and meet with the other player from their same country. For example, the players in the two Alban roles should meet together to confer about the common features of their strategy and how to handle the different perspectives each has been given in representing that country. Similar meetings will occur involving the two Batian roles, and the two Concordian roles. The Erismanian role does not have a partner, so should prepare alone.

### **Negotiation -- four hours (including lunchtime)**

- Each negotiation group meets in an assigned location to conduct its negotiations
- Each group has a facilitator to help record, make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate in the discussions and to assist the negotiation
- Breaks may be taken as the group needs, including taking time for lunch
- Alert players 15 minutes before their time is up, so that they may finalize whatever agreements they have reached.

### **Small group debriefing -- 1 hour**

- The facilitator from each group should debrief the group. Review outcomes and discuss the lessons learned.
- Each group should pick one person to summarize its results at the full group debriefing.

### **Break -- 30 minutes**

The instructors and facilitators should gather and discuss the main outcomes so that they can select 3-4 different agreements to highlight. The differences among the group outcomes should be used to ensure that all the key lessons are reviewed during the plenary debriefing.

### **Plenary debriefing -- 1 hour**

- Highlight common themes from the small-group debriefings
- Highlight differences in outcomes and explore the apparent reasons for these differences
- Discuss lessons learned about how groups dealt with the science and negotiation issues

### **B. Materials**

Participants are expected to review a substantial amount of written material in preparation for the simulation. This material includes:

- a set of **general instructions**, which describe the context for the negotiation (i.e. where it takes place, who is at the table, what their main interests are, etc.);
- a set of **confidential instructions** for each role, which outline who the player is, what his/her interests are with regard to each of the issues, what options he/she prefers and why, and what his/her minimally acceptable outcomes are; and
- for some roles, **technical appendices**, including science reports and maps.

#### **For all parties:**

- General instructions
- Appendices:
  - Map A
  - Map B
  - Map C
  - Map D

**Role Specific:**

Confidential Instructions for the following roles:

- Alban Business Leader
- Alban Humanitarian Organization Representative
- Batian General
- Batian Emergency Management Director
- Concordian Economic Development Consultant
- Concordian Land Preservation Advocate, plus Map E (8 copies for everyone at the table)
- Erismanian Government Finance Minister
- Facilitator, plus Additional Instructions for Concordian Land Preservation Advocate and Map F (8 copies)

**Equipment needed:**

- Name tags or name tents
- Flip charts
- Colored markers
- Tape for posting sheets
- Pen/pencils for participants
- Clock/watch
- Overhead projector and blank transparencies
- Space: Ideally, one large room for introduction and general debriefing; some smaller rooms for caucusing and same-role meetings; and, one small room for each group to conduct its negotiations.

**V. Participant Questions****Questions usually asked prior to, and during, the negotiation:**

*Do I have to follow the instructions precisely? Can't I interpret my role in the way I prefer?*

There's not enough time to handle more issues beyond those already included. So, don't try to add more issues or topics. However, you may be as creative as you like in generating solutions raised in your confidential instructions, as long as you remain faithful to the role and priorities you have been assigned.

*I need more information about \_\_\_\_.*

All the information you need is provided, although it may not be all in your hands. You can make assumptions based on the data you have, but try to avoid inventing outrageously fictitious data. You are likely to be challenged by others.

*Do we have to live with the facts as given? What if I don't think they're realistic?*

Yes, you have to stick with the issues, facts, interests, and priorities as defined in your Confidential Instructions. These are important to creating realistic differences in perspectives among the players. You are encouraged to be creative and inventive about ways that the players may advance their interests and goals.

*We don't have enough information about the costs of reconstruction or the amount of damage in each country. What should we do?*

The simulation is designed to focus on the big picture, and leaves out a lot of detail, for which there would not be time for adequate discussion. You may make reasonable assumptions based on the information you do have and discuss them with the others in your negotiating group. Agreements may be contingent upon "further study" or "joint fact finding."

*Can I show my worksheet to my opponent to help him/her understand my concerns?*

Absolutely not. Under no circumstances should you share any part of your confidential information to the other participants. However, you can relay any information contained in the Confidential Instructions without actually showing anyone the pages that you have. There is no way in real life to prove that what you say is true by showing someone a piece of paper!

*Shall I reveal my emotions in my role or try to remain completely stoical?*

Displaying emotions in your role is an important aspect of simulating a negotiation. Try to incorporate your feelings into your negotiating strategy.

*Are caucuses allowed? Do we all have to stay together at the table the whole time?*

This depends on the situation. You may want to caucus with someone at the table to build a supporting coalition, or to assess the possibilities of blocking the actions of other players. The group may decide at the beginning of the negotiation, however, with the help of the facilitator, when and how caucuses will be allowed.

### **Questions typically asked after the negotiation:**

*Is it realistic to expect negotiations like these to succeed in such a short time?*

In the game, yes. In real life, probably not. We are telescoping the situation in order to highlight key learning points within the time available.

*What is the best outcome possible?*

There are many creative outcomes possible. It would be best if each player exceeded his/her bottom line (or BATNA as it is called). In general, a "best" outcome is one that gets agreement that meets the interests of all players while maintaining positive relationships.

## VI. Same Role Meetings

To help participants play their roles well, they usually need an opportunity to talk through their assigned material in detail with others who will have to play the same role (in different group). Same-role meetings are designed to facilitate strategic discussion, although the group is NOT expected to reach agreement on how their role should be played. Specifically, same role meetings should help participants:

- 1) **Fully understand the material they have read.** Both the group facilitator and the participants with the same role assignment can clarify parts of their instructions or technical appendices that they found confusing or unclear.
- 2) **Internalize the interests and aspirations of their role.** Discussing Confidential Instructions in a group often helps participants absorb the information and internalize it. This increases comfort levels when it is time for one person to play their role.
- 3) **Formulate a negotiating strategy to guide them during the negotiation.** Group strategizing helps participants decide what they will do when the simulation begins: *i.e.*, who they will talk to, what information they need to obtain from others, and what proposals they will make in an effort to build coalitions supportive of the options they prefer.

### **SUGGESTIONS ABOUT HOW TO LEAD A SAME ROLE MEETING**

#### **Same role discussion leaders often say the following:**

- 1) Please read your general and confidential instructions very carefully before you come to the meeting. (N.B. Discussion leaders will find that participants will ask them to answer clarifying questions. Moreover, it will be difficult to lead a discussion if participants have not read their confidential instructions).
- 2) Keep in mind that the main objective of the meeting is to help you step back from the detail, synthesize what is absolutely most important, and decide how you are going to develop a final agreement that can win the necessary support of others.
- 3) You may not agree with others about how to interpret your role assignment. Particularly when it comes to strategy, you may have your own ideas about how to advance your interests, who to talk to first, and what you want to say. That's fine. There's lot of room for interpretation. What you CAN NOT do is redefine your goals or redefine your walk-away (BATNA).

(Note to discussion leaders: During the discussion, it will be important to let the participants do most of the talking. Your role will be to ask probing questions, engage people in conversation, and, occasionally, to offer observations or suggestions if



participants are slow to offer their own. Help them stay on track and to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to speak.)

The following questions may help guide the participants in developing a sound strategy:

**What are your three or four most important interests in this negotiation (in other words, what do you want to achieve)?**

Participants should be able to easily extract their three or four most important interests from their confidential instructions. We want them to step back from the details and reflect on their priorities.

We want to remind them that they can interpret the information they are given about their positions in light of what they discover through the process of caucusing and negotiating with others. The better understanding players have of their core interests, the more creative they will be able to be in devising “mutual gain” solutions.

**What arguments can you make to persuade other players that your interests should be met in the final agreement?**

Ask participants to actually rehearse how they will explain to others "why I want what I want."

**Which players are likely to share your interests in this negotiation and why?**

This question will lay the groundwork for the development of a coalition strategy. We want to get participants thinking about who they can build alliances with early in the negotiation. To do this, they need to think somewhat systematically about who might share their interests on the issues that are most important to them.

**Which players are likely to have conflicting interests? What will those interests be and why?**

The goal of this question is to help participants realize that not everyone coming to the table will share their interests. This may seem obvious, but often parties preparing for a negotiation are so focused on understanding their own interests that they completely neglect to identify their likely opponents. In order to identify likely opponents, they must systematically imagine the interests of other players on the issues most important to them.

**What are some proposals you might make to other players that would meet key interests of yours while also meeting the key interests of others?**

Once participants have engaged in a serious effort to imagine who will be their likely allies and opponents and why, they are ready to start preparing proposals that will meet some of the key interests of other players -- allies or opponents.

**What proposals from other players on your most important issues would be absolutely unacceptable to you and why? What will you do if the group appears ready to accept these proposals (i.e., what is your BATNA)?**

It is important that participants understand the difference between their “minimally acceptable outcomes” (which are laid out in their instructions) and what it is that they will do if it looks as though those outcomes are not within reach. Explain that a BATNA is what you could / will do if the dialogue does not lead to an agreement, and decision-making proceeds through a traditional legislative or bureaucratic process. It is not as if NOTHING will happen if no agreement is reached.

One final note, don't get discouraged if you don't get through all these questions. Any amount of preparation will help, and each player's understanding of his or her role will increase as they play the game.

## **VII. Debriefing**

### **A. In-Group Debriefing**

The purpose of the in-group debriefing is to allow participants to discuss what happened in their negotiating groups in more details. It also gives participants a chance to vent, should they need it.

We recommend that you open the debriefing by "going around the table", asking each player to answer (briefly --no more than 2-3 minutes) the following questions:

#### *Individual Process -- Goals and Outcomes*

- 1) What were your main goals, and what negotiation strategy were you using to achieve them?
- 2) How well did your strategy work for you?
- 3) What would you do differently if you played the game again?

As each player is answering these questions, you may wish to comment or ask a follow-up question. You may also ask other players to comment on how they responded to the speaker's negotiating strategy and tactics during the game.

### *Group Process and Outcome*

After each player has had a chance to discuss his/her experience, you should ask the players to consider how well they worked together. It is probably most effective to ask them to first reflect on the outcome and then to ask them how the group process affected that outcome. We suggest asking the following questions:

- 1) Did the group achieve an agreement that all parties could accept?
- 2) If so, what were the key moments in the group process (*e.g.*, fact-finding, inventing and packaging of options, calling a break for caucusing, ideas contributed by one or more players to deal with differences) that made agreement possible?
- 3) Stepping out of your game role and back into the role of an "outside expert," how would you evaluate this agreement's economic, environmental, and social impacts, assuming it would be actually implemented?

In addition to soliciting comments from the participants, you can make your own comments on the group process and outcome.

### *Lessons Learned -- Reverberating Effects, Role of Science, Use of Multi-Party Negotiation Approaches and Consensus-Building Skills, Personal Relationships*

Then focus on the individual learnings that occurred and whether they were shared by the group as a whole. You might use the following questions to prompt this discussion:

- 1) What were the most important lessons you learned from participating in the simulation about:
  - The reverberating effects of disasters?
  - The use of science and technical information in planning for, and recovering from, natural disasters?
  - The use of multi-party negotiation approaches and consensus-building skills in preparing for, and recovering from, natural disasters?
  - The value of having ongoing personal relationships before disasters occur?
- 2) What obstacles would have to be overcome for you to be willing to participate in collaborative efforts on these issues in your country or region?

Finally, you should take some notes on the discussion to share during the plenary debriefing, when all the negotiating groups reconvene.

## **B. Comment Form**

At the end of the in-group debriefing, hand out the Comment Form to the participants and give them 10-15 minutes to fill them out in the room. Collect the forms as participants leave the room. It is important to get them to fill them out right there, since not many participants ever fill them out later and send them in.

## **C. Plenary Debriefing**

The purpose of this debriefing is to highlight for everyone the key lessons that can be learned from the simulation. While the participants are on their break, you and your partner facilitators and instructors should take a few minutes to use the following slides to guide the debriefing discussion. (Cover as many as time allows.)

### ***Slide 1: Meeting Outcomes***

The purpose of this discussion is to allow the negotiating groups to share their experiences and to portray the range of outcomes that emerged. The faculty member should pick three or four different outcomes – agreement, non-agreement, different packages – and lead the participants through a discussion of the events that shaped those agreements, and the challenges each set of negotiators faced.

- Explore the range of agreements reached.
- Pick 3 or 4 groups to present their diverse agreements and to briefly relate the key events that led to those outcomes. (Do not try to cover every group.)
- What do the other participants think about these agreements?

### ***Slide 2: Complicating Factors Affecting Recovery from Natural Disasters***

The purpose of this discussion is to highlight some of the complicating factors involved in dealing with, and planning for, natural disaster preparedness and recovery. Ask the participants how they dealt with some of the complicating factors. The questions get to heart of some of the lessons built into this simulation.

- How were the science issues handled in different groups?
- What ideas are likely to work well in real life?
- What tools and techniques of preparation would help in the future?
- What barriers or obstacles would there be to using these tools and techniques?
- What steps could be taken now to deal with the barriers and obstacles?

### ***Slide 3: Lessons Learned***

Review the list of 4 lessons that the simulation was designed to teach. Also ask participants for other lessons they may have learned.

#### ***Slide 4: Experience with Collaborative Approaches***

The purpose of this discussion is to think about using new collaborative approaches in preparing for, and recovering from, natural disasters. What do participants make of the idea of coalition building? What about joint fact-finding? What was different about this negotiation as compared to the traditional way in which disaster recovery efforts are planned? Were participants able to easily incorporate elements of the consensus building approach in their negotiating strategy? Did it work as they planned? What were the high and low points in using collaborative approaches?

- From their experience with this simulation, how do participants feel about collaborative approaches to natural disasters?
- What did they learn?
  - About ripple effects? => Unpredictable; affect many people in a multitude of ways
  - About working with multiple parties with different interests? => Focus on interests; relationships are important; explore coalitions
  - About negotiating agreements? => Hard – a neutral facilitator is helpful/essential in identifying options, managing difficult conversations
  - About dealing with uncertainty, particularly in scientific information? => Briefly explain the concept of joint fact-finding to participants
- Lead participants through a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of using collaborative approaches:
  - Advantages:
    - Focus on interests, not positions
    - Trading across issues (short term and long term) to create value – mutual gains approach
    - Focus on relationships
    - Workable, sustainable outcomes (think of ways to make implementation easier)
    - Managing uncertainty through joint fact-finding
    - Use of neutral facilitator.
  - Disadvantages:
    - Time – trying to identify and meet the interests of all parties takes time.
    - Resistance to the idea of working together with other stakeholders

#### ***Slide 5: Challenges***

Help participants reflect specifically on the challenges of using the new consensus building model in real disaster planning efforts. Allow the participants to brainstorm obstacles they foresee to its adoption, and the move to the next step of thinking about how to overcome these obstacles.

- Lead participants through a brainstorming session – what are the obstacles to moving from the traditional approaches for dealing with disasters to these new approaches?
  - Lack of consensus building capacity
  - Even a desire to collaborate is rare!
  - Organizational resistance to working with other stakeholders (who may/may not seem legitimate), particularly if they have very different interests
  - Lack of support from higher levels within each organization
  - Incomplete information from science
  - Any others the participants come up with...

***Slide 6: How to ensure that collaborative approaches will work***

The purpose of this stage of the debriefing is to help participants think through the next steps they might take to help put collaborative approaches into practice in their own countries and organizations.

- Another group brainstorming session – what steps can participants take now to build support for this new model?
  - Consensus building training ( become a trainer)
  - Clearer institutional guidelines favoring joint fact-finding
  - Proactive use of neutrals to help facilitate negotiations
  - Highlight opportunities for enhanced relationships
  - Any others participants come up with...